

GLOBAL CINEMA

Edited by Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikó Imre, and Áine O'Healy

The **Global Cinema** series publishes innovative scholarship on the transnational themes, industries, economies, and aesthetic elements that increasingly connect cinemas around the world. It promotes theoretically transformative and politically challenging projects that rethink film studies from cross-cultural, comparative perspectives, bringing into focus forms of cinematic production that resist nationalist or hegemonic frameworks. Rather than aiming at comprehensive geographical coverage, it foregrounds transnational interconnections in the production, distribution, exhibition, study, and teaching of film. Dedicated to global aspects of cinema, this pioneering series combines original perspectives and new methodological paths with accessibility and coverage. Both "global" and "cinema" remain open to a range of approaches and interpretations, new and traditional. Books published in the series sustain a specific concern with the medium of cinema but do not defensively protect the boundaries of film studies, recognizing that film exists in a converging media environment. The series emphasizes a historically expanded rather than an exclusively presentist notion of globalization; it is mindful of repositioning "the global" away from a US-centric/Eurocentric grid, and remains critical of celebratory notions of "globalizing film studies."

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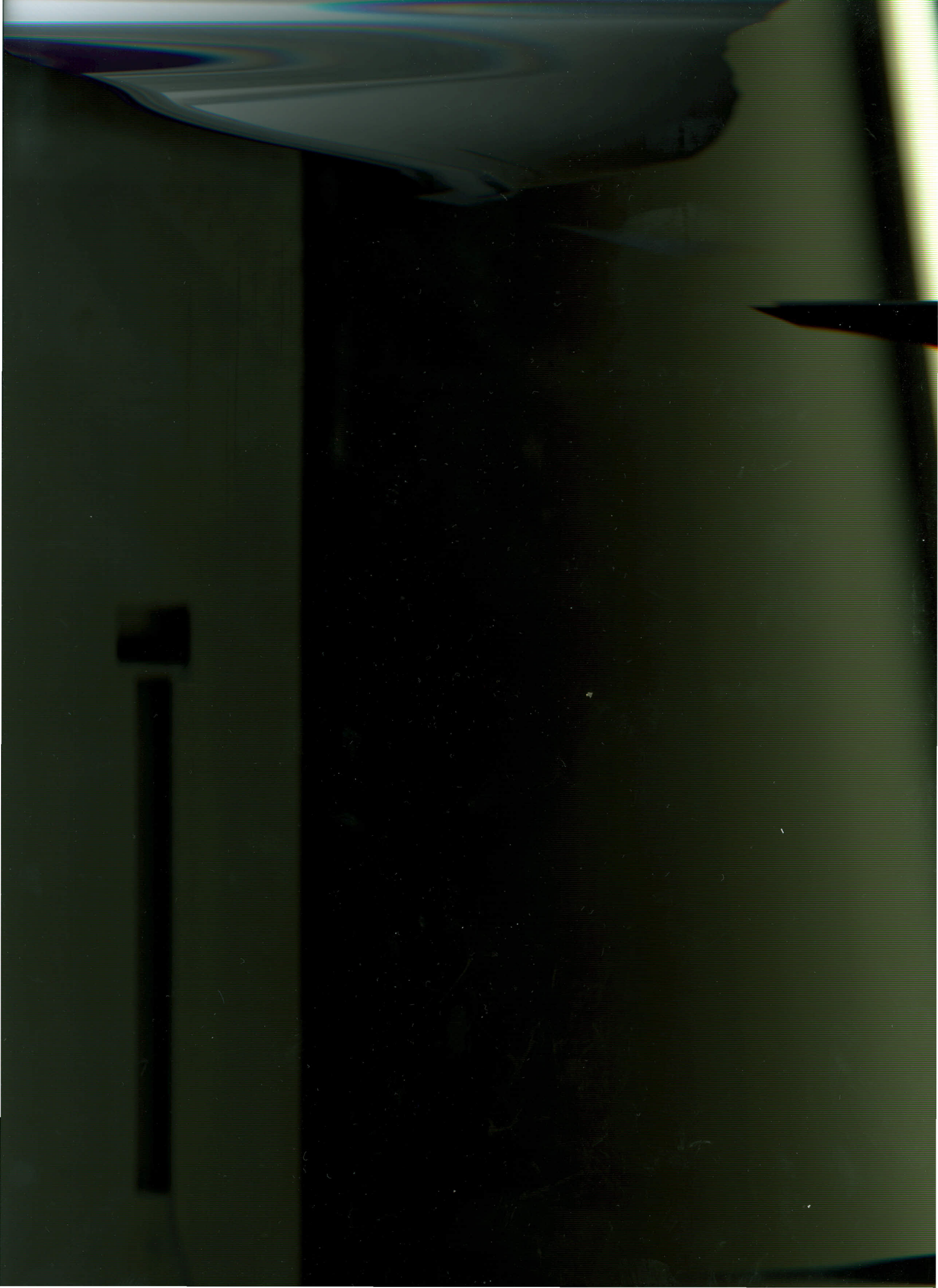
Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures
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List of Tables and Figures

Introduction

Petr Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau

Part I: Fields and Approaches

- 1 Borderlands, Contact Zones, and Beyond
A Conversation with John T. Caldwell
Patrick Vonderau
- 2 Analyzing Production from a Sociological Perspective
Sara Malm Sørensen
- 3 The "Cultural" of Production and the Cultural Studies
Chris Mathies
- 4 Acts of Embodiment: A Comparative Study of
of Filmmakers' Gestures
Emanuel Grinand
- 5 Film Production as a Palimpsest
Sylvie Lindeperg

Part II: Modes of Production

- 6 Stress Aesthetics and Desynchronization: Postwar
John T. Caldwell
- 7 The State-socialist Mode of Production and
of Production Culture
Petr Szczepanik
- 8 A Flexible Mode of Production: International
Filmmaking in Postwar Europe
Daniel Steinbock
- 9 A European Take on the Showrunner: Danish Television
Production
Ole Nørup Rasmussen
- 10 Exporting Hollywood: Nigerian Video Filmmaking in Europe
Alexandra Jedlowski

Exporting Nollywood: Nigerian Video Filmmaking in Europe

Alessandro Jedlowski

When Kenneth Nnebue, a Nigerian electronics dealer, produced the film *Living in Bondage* in 1992, he probably had no idea of what its release would represent 20 years later. But today, among Africans of all nationalities, the title of this film is synonymous with the birth of the largest entertainment industry in Africa.¹ The Nigerian video film industry, commonly referred to as Nollywood, is indeed considered to be one of the largest film industries in the world.² The films produced there circulate all over Africa and throughout the African diaspora in Europe and elsewhere.³ To many, the emergence of the Nigerian video industry represents the most important event in the recent history of African media. The video industry has managed to develop autonomously without any support from the government. It created independent and informal systems of production, distribution, and exhibition, which enabled the production of low-budget films that were released straight to video and watched in most cases at home or in informal neighborhood screening venues.⁴

As the Nigerian journalist Steve Ayorinde has underlined, Nigerian videos have circulated among Nigerian and sub-Saharan African people in Europe and North America since the industry's early days.⁵ As is often the case with the consumption of indigenous media in diasporic contexts, Nigerian videos became the vector through which people managed to create and maintain multiple forms of connection with their homeland. Videos participated in the construction of an Afrocentric transnational and diasporic mediascape that still appeals to people of African descent throughout the world today. As I have explained elsewhere,⁶ for a long time, videos circulated through informal and pirated networks, but the industry has progressively realized the economic potential of the diasporic market and it is now trying to formalize it. However, besides this recent development, the diaspora has played an influential role in the industry's general economy almost since the video phenomenon began.

First of all, the diaspora has been used by Nigerian directors and producers as both a setting and a narrative device. As Jonathan Haynes discusses,⁷ films that

thematize the experience of living abroad that are partially or entirely set outside Nigeria and Africa have almost become a genre in their own right. The production of films of this kind has witnessed a remarkable increase following the great popular success of two Nigerian films set in Europe, *Osuofia in London* (2003) and *Dangerous Twins* (2004). The success of these films gave Nigerian producers an idea of the commercial potential of such stories, and countless diaspora-centered films were released.

While some Nigerian producers used foreign settings as a narrative device, the diaspora also became an autonomous site of production. The success of Nigerian videos among diasporic Africans encouraged some Nigerian entrepreneurs based in Europe and North America to set up autonomous ventures. Production companies of this kind emerged in many European countries (Holland, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom) as well as in the United States and Canada. There are numerous interesting aspects to this phenomenon that seems to constitute a rather original development in the recent history of diasporic and migrant filmmaking.⁸ While the emergence of diasporic and migrant cinema in both Europe and North America is indeed a long-term, widely documented phenomenon, the creation of independent production companies that intend to reproduce the format and structure of an indigenous popular culture industry within the diaspora is a subject that has rarely been focused on.⁹

The central aim of this chapter is therefore to describe this phenomenon and try and define its main features. In doing so, this article will try to address an area of analysis that is often left at the margins of both production studies and diasporic cinema studies, namely the analysis and interpretation of the production strategies developed within the diasporic context. On the one hand, as I will discuss in more detail in the first section of this chapter, most of the work that has focused on diasporic and migrant filmmaking has focused on the film's "text" rather than on the economic and entrepreneurial strategies developed to produce the film itself.¹⁰ On the other hand, most of the work in production studies has mainly dealt with Western production practices, and when, for example, in the remarkable study of the Bollywood industry by Tejaswini Ganti, it has focused on non-Western film industries, the analysis of diasporic production practices has been left at its margins.¹¹ By applying the ethnographic methodology that defines much of scholarly production studies to diasporic and migrant filmmaking in this context, this chapter will place emphasis on the emergence and progressive consolidation of a range of production strategies that might acquire particular relevance in the definition of filmmaking practices in Europe and elsewhere in years to come.

The data presented and analyzed in this chapter were gathered during the ethnographic studies I conducted between 2009 and 2011 in Nigeria, Italy, and England as part of a research project about the transnationalization of the Nigerian video industry's economy. Using anthropological methodology, I engaged in participative observation on film sets and distribution venues, interviewed industry insiders in Nigeria and abroad, and raised issues relating to the production and consumption of video films by audiences in Nigeria and Europe.¹²

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I will outline the theoretical context within which the analysis of the emergence of Nigerian

diasporic filmmaking can be set. In the second, I will present the history of the emergence of Nollywood production companies in various European countries from a comparative perspective. I will outline the specificities of the modes of production and distribution that these companies have developed and discuss their interrelations with production and distribution infrastructures in both Europe and Nigeria in the third section.

Migrant and Diasporic Filmmaking in Europe: Theories and Practices

Migrant and diasporic filmmaking began in Europe as early as the mid-twentieth century, when significant waves of migration from southern European and extra-European countries began to modify the continent's demographic structure. The first occurrences of this kind emerged in the most industrialized European countries: the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. The first academic attempts to conceptualize migrant and diasporic cinema were thus formulated in relation to the film productions that appeared in these countries. As Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg have shown, the way these forms of filmmaking have been theorized varies in relation to the principle used to differentiate them from mainstream cinema production. Migrant and diasporic films have indeed been analyzed through multiple prisms such as "social categorization (*Migrantenkino*), racial or ethno-national emphases (*Cinéma du métissage*, black and Asian British film, French *beur* cinema), linguistic or spatial concepts (accented cinema, *banlieu* films, cinema of double occupancy) and transnational approaches (Third cinema, black films, cinema of the South Asian diaspora)."¹³ As I suggested earlier, however, it must be noted that within this context, very little scholarship has directly focused on the analysis of the production strategies that emerged in relation to diasporic and migrant filmmaking in Europe. On the contrary, most of the attention has been directed toward the analysis of the narrative and aesthetic specificities of the films produced within such contexts, and the methodology applied has generally been closer to text analysis than ethnographic investigation.

Nevertheless, even though such scholarly studies propose a theoretical approach to the study of diasporic filmmaking that is significantly different from the one this article intends to posit, they can shed light on the present analysis by offering a number of useful conceptual tools that can help us to understand the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural conditions that define the experience of the diasporic subject's everyday life. This influences the economic and entrepreneurial strategies developed within the diasporic context. As Vicki Mayer underlined, there is a close relationship between the micro (the individual) and macro (the society) stories that interweave during the production process. "As a field of study"—Mayer emphasizes—

"production study" captures . . . the ways that power operates locally through media production to reproduce social hierarchies and inequalities at the level of daily interaction. In other words, production studies "ground" social theories by showing us how specific production sites, actors or activities teach us larger lessons

about workers, their practices and their roles in relation to politics, economics and culture.¹⁴

In this sense, as this chapter will highlight, there is a strong interconnection between the position that the diasporic subject inhabits within the social fabric of the host country, the way diasporic film productions are organized, and the place diasporic filmmaking occupies within the larger framework defined by European and national cinema policies and infrastructures.

Even though they have focused on different case studies, most of the authors that analyzed diasporic and migrant cinema have agreed that this production has a high level of political engagement. Within this framework, diaspora and migration are seen as phenomena that inhabit a “third space” within the social architecture of a country’s population, a place that is both within and beyond the sphere of the nation.¹⁵ The existence of this space and the subjects in it implicitly and inevitably challenge the integrity of the nation-state and its homogeneity as an “imagined community.”¹⁶ Indeed, in Abdelmalek Sayad’s analysis, the experience of migration is characterized by a “double absence,” an existential condition created by the fact that one is neither completely “here” nor completely “there” and somehow foreign everywhere.¹⁷ In Thomas Elsaesser’s words, this kind of condition generates a cinema of “double occupancy,” cinema that narrates the experience of living in one place while constantly referring to the fact of belonging somewhere else.¹⁸ In relation to this condition, films produced in the diaspora can be defined, as suggested by Hamid Naficy, as “accented”; they are characterized by a specific narrative and aesthetic nuance that is a reminder of their connection to a specific geographical (cultural, economic, and political) elsewhere.¹⁹ In this sense, these films can be labeled as “interstitial,” because they occupy a position of radical in-betweenness. According to Naficy, “accented films are interstitial because they are created astride and in the interstices of social formation and cinematic practices. Consequently they are simultaneously local and global, and they resonate against the prevailing cinematic production practices, at the same time that they benefit from them.”²⁰

Naficy’s remarks allow us to move from the socioeconomic condition of the diasporic subject to the specificities of the film production strategies the subject develops. Indeed, as he exists in a space of social and existential interstitiality, the migrant filmmaker has to play with its “double occupancy” and multiple identities strategically. He therefore has to experiment with transnational and unconventional funding strategies. By using them, he places his work both at the periphery of national cinema infrastructures and at the centre of transnational and global interactions. This intrinsically fragile and fluid position means that migrant and diasporic cinema’s modes of production are often informal and based on mutual solidarity and cooperation rather than on contractual forms of collaboration. As Mariagiulia Grassilli has emphasized, within this framework

film-makers very often... perform multiple functions (film-maker, director, editor, scriptwriter, et cetera) and personally invest in their films, directly financing a share of the budget, either through personal funds or in-kind by waving the fee for

scriptwriting and directing, and by involving families and friends in the production or as actors to keep the costs down.²¹

The limited budgets that tend to define these films push migrant and diasporic directors to constantly experiment with new, more affordable technologies. Furthermore, the specificity of these technologies, which are mostly digital, portable, and economically accessible, plays an important part in enabling the circulation of migrant and diasporic films, even among largely fragmented and dispersed audiences. This circulation rarely goes through the conventional distribution channels. While the most successful films might manage to circulate in film festivals and thematic retrospectives, a large part of migrant and diasporic films is distributed informally through the rhizomatic networks traced by what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih have defined as “minor transnationalism.”²²

Besides the theoretical framework defined by the corpus of academic studies on migrant and diasporic cinema, the research on the growing influence of nonresident Indian (NRI) films within the economy of the Indian film industry is also useful for this analysis.²³ Even though there are numerous differences between this phenomenon and the case analyzed here, it raises a number of important points that are relevant to this discussion. As I stated above, in most cases, migrant and diasporic cinema have been looked at through the prism of a Third Cinema-inspired theory, which emphasizes the political importance of this kind of film production, its intrinsic value as an act of resistance, and its potential to subvert the nation-state’s official discourse. However, research on NRI films highlights the role of popular culture in processes of identity transformation and re-articulation within the diaspora. It therefore gives us useful elements to analyze the contents and structure of diasporic popular culture and focuses on the connection between these cultural formations and the industrial economy of cultural production in the homeland. As Aswin Punathambekar has underlined, Indian people within the diaspora have watched Indian films collectively since the 1960s/1970s in order to get together and reassert their connection with the homeland as well as their existence as a community.²⁴ Since the mid-1990s, however, due to a number of changes that affected the economy of the film industry in India and pushed its organization toward higher levels of formalization, the role of diasporic audiences has become more significant economically, accounting for almost 30 percent of the industry’s earnings by 2004.²⁵ This produced a number of significant changes in the content of Bollywood films and in the industry’s economic organization. It also opened new avenues of circulation for the Indian film industry within the global cinema arena. As many scholars have emphasized,²⁶ the massive consumption of Bollywood films in the diaspora and the progressive transformation of the narrative and aesthetic features of Indian films to cater for the tastes of diasporic audiences acted as a bridge that introduced Bollywood into the global cinema arena and made it familiar to Western audiences.

Many of the specificities of migrant and diasporic “auteur” filmmaking and NRI Bollywood productions can also be identified in the emergence of Nigerian video production companies in Europe. As I suggested earlier, contrary to the diasporic and migrant films analyzed in the scholarly studies discussed above, Nigerian

production companies based in Europe focus on entertainment-oriented production rather than artistic and politically engaged production. They produce, as in the case of NRI Bollywood ventures, entertainment films aimed at diasporic audiences but they also do so from within the diaspora itself. They are thus dissociated from the industry in Nigeria and eventually enter into ambiguous competition with it. As a result, even if the analytical concepts that I have just discussed are useful and inspiring, they are not enough to describe the complexity of the phenomenon that I intend to analyze. One could say, for instance, that the emergence of Nigerian production companies in Europe can fall between the production of migrant and diasporic cinema and the progressive transformation of the role of NRI films in the Bollywood economy. However, such a generic statement needs to be further developed, in part through the analysis of the historical evolution of Nigerian diasporic production companies.

Nollywood Abroad: Nigerian Video Filmmaking in Europe

Double "A" Entertainment created by Tony Dele Akynyemi and Leonard Ajayi-Odekhiran in Eindhoven, in the Netherlands, around 1998 was the first Nigerian production company to appear in Europe. As reported by Sophie Samyn, the two Nigerians met soon after arriving in Holland at the beginning of the 1990s.²⁷ They were both partly involved in the entertainment industry before leaving Nigeria (Akynyemi used to work for a local television station and Ajayi-Odekhiran was a dancer and singer), but when they left the country the local video film industry had not yet emerged. As they explain in the interview that Samyn conducted with them,²⁸ they learnt about Nollywood in Europe and they became enthusiastic fans. They drew inspiration from the Nigerian video films they had watched over the years, decided to set up their own production company, and in 1998, they produced their first video, *Under Pressure*. The video shot with few means recounts the biographical experiences of the two producers and tells the story of a young Nigerian who moves to Holland and struggles to settle down and build a new life for himself. The video managed to circulate widely through informal networks among diasporic audiences but it did not cover its production costs. However, its success with diasporic audiences gave the two producers enough motivation to continue their venture and produce three other videos over the next few years: *Dapo Junior* (2000), *Holland Heat* (2002), and *From Amsterdam with Love* (2003).

While Akynyemi and Ajayi-Odekhiran's work can be seen as the avant-garde of Nigerian video production in Europe, in the early 2000s there was a boom in the creation of diasporic production companies. It is around this period that, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, a number of videos set in Europe but produced by companies based in Nigeria (such as *Osuofia in London* and *Dangerous Twins*) achieved astonishing commercial success both in Nigeria and within the diaspora. Their success attracted the interest of numerous Nigerians living in Europe, and new production companies began to spring up in numerous European countries.

In the United Kingdom, Obi Emelonye, a young Nigerian living in London since the early 1990s, created the company Basic Input and released his first video, *Good Friends* (2000). Following a short stay in Nigeria, he returned to the UK, and created a new production company called The Nollywood Factory. With this new company, Emelonye went on to produce several films, such as *Echoes of War* (2003), *The London Successor* (2006), *Lucky Joe* (2006), *The Mirror Boy* (2010), and *Last Flight to Abuja* (2012), some of which were released in mainstream cinemas all over the United Kingdom.

Isaac Izoya, a Nigerian journalist based in Berlin since the end of the 1990s, created Ehizoya Golden Entertainment in Germany in 2003. The production company has released three videos: *Zero Your Mind* (2003), *Love in Berlin... The Meeting Point* (2007), and *Run But Can't Hide I & II* (2008). Izoya's videos were successful both in Nigeria and within the Nigerian diaspora in Europe thanks to the specific production and distribution strategies he introduced; these included hiring successful Nollywood filmmakers to direct the videos and organizing promotional tours in Europe with well-known Nollywood actors and stand-up comedians. I will discuss these strategies in more detail below but one can argue that thanks to these strategies Izoya is probably the most famous diasporic producer in Nigeria and the one who, together with Emelonye, has managed to reach the largest audience, both in Nigeria and in the diaspora.

Two production companies emerged in Italy in the mid-2000s: IGB Film and Music Industry, created in Brescia by Prince Frank Abieyuwa Osharhenoguwu in 2001, and GVK, created in Turin by Vincent Omoigui and Rose Okoh in 2006. The two companies developed different production and distribution strategies.²⁹ Osharhenoguwu was involved in the video industry before leaving Nigeria and had already produced three video films before arriving in Italy. Since he created IGB, the company has released four new titles (*Kiki Marriage* [2003], *Abroad Wahala* [2005], *The Only Way after Home but It's Risky* [2007], and *The Hard Nut to Crack* [2008]), which have mainly circulated among Nigerian diasporic audiences in Italy and within the regional market in Edo State, the Nigerian region where the producer is from. The creators of GVK had no prior experience of filmmaking and film production before moving to Italy. After the release of their first video film, *Efe-Obomwan*, in 2006, they decided to change their venture to target both Nigerian and Italian audiences. They therefore started collaborating with an Italian filmmaker, Simone Sandretti, and worked on four film projects: *Uwado* (2008), *Akpegi Boyz* (2009), "We Are Not Slaves" (not completed), and "Blinded Devil" (not completed).³⁰ The videos had rather limited circulation, mainly through small film festivals and privately organized screenings but they garnered good support from the local press and local institutions.

The last Nigerian production company to be created was the Association of Nigerian Actors and Actresses in Belgium (ANAABEL), founded in Antwerp, Belgium, by John Osas Omoregie in 2003. Like Vincent Omoigui and Rose Okoh, Omoregie did not have any experience of filmmaking before moving to Europe but, as Samyn has showed,³¹ while in Belgium he became familiar with Tony Dele Akynyemi, Leonard Ajayi-Odekhiran, and Isaac Izoya's works and was inspired by them. He set up his own production company and has since released five

videos: *Igho Evbue Ebo* (2003), *Desperate Heart* (2007), *Mama Why Me? I & II* (2008), *The Immigrant Eyes* (2010), and *Amazing World* (2010). After an initial period of economic hardship due to a number of personal problems, Omoregie's work received an important boost thanks to *Nollywood Abroad* (2008), the documentary Belgian documentary filmmaker Saartje Geerts made about him.³²

Production Strategies in a Comparative Perspective

The overview of the history of these production companies that I have just given allows for a comparative evaluation of the production and distribution strategies that they have developed. Like other experiences of migrant and diasporic cinema, these production companies exist in a space of social and cultural in-betweenness. However, if they are compared to the instances of migrant and diasporic cinema I discussed above (those defined by artistic and politically engaged orientation), their in-betweenness is radicalized by a number of factors. On the one hand, as they were based on the model of the Nigerian video industry, a popular culture industry with commercial rather than artistic orientation, these production companies could not find space in the European funding system. This system promotes cultural diversity while also setting specific aesthetic and narrative standards aimed at author-cinema rather than popular entertainment.³³ On the other hand, by trying to make commercial films from a peripheral position, these companies faced unfair competition from both European national film industries and Nollywood. These companies at the margin of these industries hardly managed to compete on the same level as mainstream commercial film productions of both traditions. Since their budgets were generally lower than that of mainstream productions, the narrative and aesthetic language was more hybrid, and their access to established networks of distribution in both regions (West Africa and Europe) was limited, these production companies had to elaborate original solutions that could give them access to larger economic resources.

The strategies applied by each production company were very different, and they had different and sometimes even contradicting goals. While some companies tried to change their modes of operation to target cinema festivals and international black diasporic audiences, others tried to create links with the video industry in Nigeria and thereby gain access to its market. While some managed to achieve their goal, many others remained stuck in their position of in-betweenness, barely surviving in very critical economic conditions. As Toni Abulu, who is himself a Nigerian diasporic filmmaker, has emphasized when referring to Nigerian diasporic productions in the United States, "[they] are lost in between! They didn't manage to do mainstream American movies and they didn't build a niche market for themselves [in the United States]. But they still don't have a strong market [in Nigeria]. They are lost in the middle of two worlds!"³⁴ Abulu's remark also applies to diasporic production companies based in Europe. Some examples will help to further develop this discussion.

As I mentioned above, the two most successful diasporic production companies are, at least in my view, Isaac Izoya's Ehizoya Golden Entertainment and Obi

Emelonye's The Nollywood Factory. An analysis of the opposing production and distribution strategies they developed will help to identify the main tendencies within the landscape of Nigerian diasporic filmmaking in Europe. As it is a popular culture industry, Nollywood is based upon a well-consolidated star system.³⁵ Video sales depend more on the "faces" printed on VCD and DVD sleeves rather than on solid film plots and narrative structure. Diasporic filmmakers inevitably had to come to terms with this reality to position their work in the market.

Isaac Izoya is probably the diasporic director who adhered most explicitly to this system. To compete with mainstream Nollywood releases, he hired a very successful Nigerian filmmaker, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, to direct most of his productions, and the casts often featured well-known Nigerian stars.³⁶ Tony Dele Akinyemi and Leonard Ajayi-Odekhiran had already applied this strategy a few years before Izoya when they brought Nigerian stars Saint Obi and Liz Benson to Holland to shoot *Dapo Junior*. But the production costs that this initiative required (the actors' fees, travel and accommodation expenses, and visa fees) were hard to recover, and the participation of these actors was not enough to make the film economically profitable. To avoid similar problems, Izoya organized parallel entertainment events during which fans could meet the stars. The first event of this kind was organized in Germany in 2003 and, due to its success, it was repeated a few times over the following years. Each time, new European countries were added to the promotional tours.³⁷ Often, the stars brought to Europe for these kinds of events were also featuring in a new production, thus cutting the costs of travel, accommodation, and visa procedures and increasing profits. Furthermore, by applying this strategy, Izoya made a name for himself as a Nigerian cultural ambassador and was often portrayed by the Nigerian press as a man who will be remembered for helping to bring Nollywood to world attention. This gave him solid connections within Nollywood and made it easier to market his films in Nigeria.

Obi Emelonye adopted a very different strategy. As he underlined in a recent interview, since the beginning of his career as a filmmaker, he has wanted to differentiate his work from Nollywood mainstream productions. He therefore oriented himself toward higher-budget films that would allow Nollywood to enter the global arena. "Once I started making films in Nollywood I told myself that . . . I wasn't going to use the so called stars. I wanted to create my brand, up to the level that my name carries the film as opposite to have a star to sell it."³⁸ To do this, Emelonye got involved in transnational coproductions (i.e., UK/Nigeria/Sierra Leone for *Echoes of War* and UK/Nigeria/Gambia for *The Mirror Boy*), used expensive recording equipment, and targeted cinema audiences. With these production and distribution strategies, he became the first Nollywood director whose films were released in Odeon cinemas all over the UK. Together with a number of other diasporic Nigerian artists in 2010, he promoted an initiative at the British Film Institute in London to sanction the birth of "New Nigerian cinema," a movement that intends to promote higher production values for Nollywood films while targeting the global film market. By applying this strategy, Emelonye aligned himself with a number of Nigerian diasporic directors operating in the United States and Canada who have decided to produce higher-budget

films to target international cinema audiences.³⁹ While the work of these directors is giving Nigerian cinema and Nollywood a new position within the world cinema landscape, their films are introducing important aesthetic and narrative transformations that are progressively moving these films away from Nigerian popular audiences. To achieve wider recognition, these directors had to move toward more standardized narrative and aesthetic formats that could easily be accepted by international audiences.

While Izoya's production strategies try to reduce the distance between mainstream Nollywood films and diasporic productions by accepting the rules of the Nigerian video market, Emelonye's are oriented toward the creation of a space for the emergence of high-production-value films within Nollywood to reposition it within the global cinema arena. Using the recent transnational development of the Bollywood industry as a model, the directors and producers who, like Emelonye, are making this strategic move tend to target worldwide African diasporic audiences rather than local Nigerian audiences. As a result, their films access theatrical distribution in Nigeria and are watched in cinemas in the suburbs of London, New York, and Huston (to name but a few). But they are hardly available on DVD and VCD in the countless open-air street markets that characterize the West African urban economy, where, on the contrary, cheap mainstream Nollywood productions are still dominant. Even if they maintain a rather entertainment-oriented style, these films tend to move toward narrative and aesthetic formats that reflect their new marketing orientation and transformed production strategies. These transformations are ultimately moving production companies like Emelonye's toward progressive "gentrification"⁴⁰ and alignment with European film production and distribution models.

The other Nigerian diasporic production companies that I mentioned above all fall between the opposite poles represented by Izoya's and Emelonye's solutions. Some of them, such as IGB in Italy and ANAABEL in Belgium, tend to reproduce the mainstream Nollywood formula but they suffer from their lack of connections to key economic players in the Nigerian industry. The works they produce hardly circulate outside the diasporic networks. For this reason, they are not economically self-sufficient and survive thanks to the constant dedication of their creators and the support of local diasporic communities. Other companies such as GVK in Italy tried to move beyond the boundaries of the Nigerian and African diaspora. However, even though their attempts to create an intercultural film language that could appeal to both African and European audiences have been well received, they are in an ambiguous position. The films they produce are not "Nollywood style" enough to captivate Nigerian popular audiences but they are not "European" enough to be distributed in cinemas in the West.

An example from my ethnographic experience will make this point clearer and draw this chapter to a close. While following the work of GVK in Turin, I observed the difficulties that the directors, Vincent Omoigui and Simone Sandretti, and the producer, Rose Okoh, faced as a consequence of their ambiguous position between Nigerian and Italian film industries and production practices. They repeatedly tried to get funding from local agencies in Italy such as the Piedmont Film Commission based in Turin, but when they finally got some support for the film

project "Blinded Devil," it turned out to be a film school scholarship for Omoigui. Omoigui accepted the scholarship but he could not help but take the offer as proof that Italian funding agencies could not accept the kind of cinema he wanted to produce (entertainment-oriented cinema based on an Afrocentric rather than Eurocentric narrative and aesthetic canon). To garner support, the film project had to be scrutinized by Italian cinema experts and was eventually altered to adhere to the narrative and aesthetic models that Italian funding agencies would expect to find in a migrant film. When they tried to distribute their third video film (*Akpegi Boyz*) in Nigeria, Omoigui and Okoh faced countless difficulties because they lived in Italy and could therefore not undertake the distribution process in Nigeria personally.⁴¹ In order to be released, the film had to be certified by the Nigerian censors board and a number of industry associations. Each process entailed fees that were often increased by opportunist intermediaries because Omoigui and Okoh knew very little about the specifics of bureaucratic regulations.⁴² As a result, the couple wasted lot of money, and in the end, the film was not released on the Nigerian market.

Conclusion: Diasporic Production Companies and "Parallel" Cinema Practices

As the above anecdote shows, the diasporic production companies that did not manage to align themselves closely with the Nigerian or European production models, as Izoya and Emelonye tried to do, fell into an in-between space that reflects the radically vulnerable position occupied by migrant and diasporic filmmakers. This shows how production and distribution practices, in Europe as well as in Nigeria, are based on complex processes of social, economic, and cultural inclusion and exclusion. But the activity of diasporic Nigerian production companies also draws our attention to the emergence and consolidation of production and distribution practices at the margins of consolidated film industries' field of action. Contrary to popular belief, these spaces are highly dynamic and productive. I am not referring to amateur film practices or experimental artistic productions like those that Laura Marks has analyzed in depth,⁴³ which are both extremely dynamic in their own terms. I am referring to the activity of production companies that conceptualize themselves as part of the mainstream, intend to produce commercial cinema, and are therefore eager to accept any compromise that will make them commercially successful. These companies inhabit a highly complex space in which the fulfillment of high ambitions is impeded by very limited resources, and multiple systems of legitimization are forced to collide in a bid to access the larger set of possible economic options (in terms of funding, production facilities, access to audiences, and so on).

The contrast that exists between the way these production companies and those working for them conceptualize their own work (as part of the Nollywood phenomenon and therefore part of a transnational and highly commercial film industry), and the actual position these ventures occupy within the cinema production landscape of the countries in which they operate tells us something about how

film production is changing in Europe. The emergence and consolidation of powerful media industries in the Global South have led to an increase in the number of centers that authorize and legitimize different filmmaking practices. They have also made the circuits that produce these films travel and become economically successful. To borrow Brian Larkin's notion of "parallel" modernities⁴⁴—that is, modernities that are made of a range of South–South connections and interrelations that often escape the attention of analysts based in the "West"—the existence and work of the production companies analyzed in this chapter draw our attention to a world of "parallel" cinema practices⁴⁵ that cannot be conceptualized as (or solely as) a set of practices at the margins of European film production. These production practices are doubly peripheral (in relation to European film industries on the one hand, and Nollywood on the other) but they are also central in defining new ways of conceiving cinema in Europe as opposed to European cinema. These practices make Europe peripheral to an elsewhere (in this case Nigeria and the Nigerian video film industry)⁴⁶ and create a space where Europe (and European film practices) can interact with the (one-time) "peripheries" of Euro-American cultural and economic power, in new, meaningful, and unexpected ways.

Notes

1. *Living in Bondage* was not the first video film released in Nigeria. After the collapse of the local celluloid film industry in the mid-1980s, a number of video films were produced, particularly in Yoruba. Nnebue's film, however, was the first to achieve widespread commercial success and it marked the beginning of what would later become the Nollywood video industry. See Jonathan Haynes, ed., *Nigerian Video Films* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).
2. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), *Analysis of the UIS International Survey on Feature Film Statistics* (Montreal: UIS, 2009), accessed April 8, 2013, www.uis.unesco.org. The term Nollywood was introduced ten years after the beginning of the video phenomenon by a *New York Times* article. It was initially rejected but local fans and media gradually adopted it. It is often used to refer to the entire Nigerian video phenomenon but many critics now prefer to limit its use. They therefore only use the term to refer to Nigerian videos in English or pidgin (creolized English) that are produced in southern Nigeria and differentiate them from the local language production that takes place in other parts of Nigeria. See Norimitsu Onishi, "Step Aside, L.A. and Bombay, for Nollywood," *New York Times*, September 16, 2002.
3. Pierre Barrot, ed., *Nollywood: Le phénomène vidéo au Nigeria* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005); Haynes, *Nigerian Video Films*; Jonathan Haynes, "The Nollywood Diaspora. A Nigerian Video Genre," in *Global Nollywood: Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry*, eds Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2013), 73–99.
4. Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Northern Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Ramon Lobato, *Shadow Economies of Cinema: Mapping Informal Film Distribution* (London: British Film Institute, 2012); Onookome Okome, "Nollywood: Spectatorship, Audience and the Sites of Consumption," *Postcolonial Text* 3, no. 2 (2007), accessed April 8, 2013, <http://journals.sfu.ca/pocol/index.php/pct/article/view/763/425>.

5. Steve Ayorinde, "Video and Celluloid... a Homeboy Shoots Up Abroad," *Guardian Nigeria*, January 28, 1999.
6. Alessandro Jedlowski, "From Nollywood to Nollywood. Processes of Transnationalization in the Nigerian Video Industry," in *Global Nollywood: Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry*, eds Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 25–45.
7. Jonathan Haynes, "Africans Abroad: A Theme in Film and Video," *Africa & Mediterraneo* 45 (2003): 22–29; see also Haynes, "The Nollywood Diaspora."
8. According to Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, the terms "diasporic" and "migrant" are used to define forms of film production that emerged from different experiences of mobility but share a number of important aspects. In Berghahn and Sternberg's words,

"migrant" ("first-generation") film-makers have themselves been part of a migratory movement and departed from a place of birth or residence in search of better economic conditions or a more secure and stable socio-political environment. "Diasporic" film-makers are typically of the second, third or a later generation. They were born or raised in a diasporic setting and have no, or only a very remote, first-hand experience of migration.

See Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, eds, "Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe," in *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 16. Most of the directors and producers whose work is discussed in this chapter belong to the "migrant" category. However, I used the term "diasporic Nigerian production" to refer, in Homi Bhabha's terms, to diaspora as a "third space," a space of hybridity within which the encounter between different articulations of identity and culture generates original solutions. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

9. Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, eds, *European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Eva Rüschemann, ed., *Moving Pictures, Migrating Identities* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2003).

For an in-depth analysis and definition of the concept of popular culture within the sub-Saharan African context, see Karin Barber, "Popular Arts in Africa," *African Studies Review* 30, no. 3 (1987): 1–78. A discussion about the applicability of this concept to the analysis of the Nigerian video film industry can be found in Haynes, *Nigerian Video Films*.

10. Berghahn and Sternberg, *European Cinema in Motion*; Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema. Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
11. See, for instance, Vicki Mayer, "Bringing the Social Back In: Studies of Production Cultures and Social Theory," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, eds Vicki Mayer, Miranda Banks, and John T. Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2009), 15–24; see the entire aforementioned collection, and also Toby Miller, Nitin Govill, John McMurria, and Richard Maxwell, *Global Hollywood* (London: British Film Institute, 2001) and Tejaswinti Ganti, *Producing Bollywood. Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
12. Besides on the data collected during my research, this article is based on interviews collected by Sophie Samyn during the fieldwork she undertook in Holland, Belgium, and

- Germany as part of the MA in Theatre, Performance and Media Studies at the University of Ghent (Belgium). I am particularly grateful to her for her kind and extremely useful collaboration.
13. Berghahn and Sternberg, "Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema," 12.
 14. Mayer, "Bringing the Social Back In."
 15. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
 16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
 17. Abdelmalek Sayad, *La double absence: des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999).
 18. Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 118.
 19. Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*.
 20. *Ibid.*, 4.
 21. Mariagiulia Grassilli, "Migrant Cinema: Transnational and Guerrilla Practices of Film Production and Representation," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34 no. 8 (2008): 1244.
 22. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds, *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Moradewun Adejunmobi, "Nigerian Video Film As Minor Transnational Practice," *Postcolonial Text* 3, no. 2, accessed April 8, 2013, <http://journals.sfu.ca/pocol/index.php/pct/article/view/548/405>.
 23. Cf. Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
 24. Aswin Punathambekar, "Bollywood in the Indian-American Diaspora. Mediating a Transitive Logic of Cultural Citizenship," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (2005): 151–173.
 25. Ganti, *Producing Bollywood*; Daya K. Thussu, "The Globalization of 'Bollywood': The Hype and the Hope," in *Global Bollywood*, eds Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 97–116.
 26. Desai, *Beyond Bollywood*; Kavoori and Punathambekar, eds, *Global Bollywood*.
 27. Sophie Samyn, "Nollywood in the Diaspora: An Exploratory Study on Transnational Aesthetics," MA Thesis, University of Ghent, 2010.
 28. Interview with Tony Dele Akynyemi and Leonard Ajayi-Odekhiran, conducted by Sophie Samyn in Eindhoven, April 24, 2010.
 29. Alessandro Jedlowski, "On the Periphery of Nollywood: Nigerian Video Filmmaking in Italy and the Emergence of an Intercultural Aesthetics," in *Postcolonial Italy: Colonial Past in Contemporary Culture*, eds Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 239–252.
 30. Toward the end of my research fieldwork (in mid-2011), GVK interrupted its activity because of lack of funding and other internal problems. The two films that I have tagged as "not completed" are at an advanced stage of the production process but have not yet been released. Because of the difficulties the production company is facing, it is not clear if and when they will be put on the market. Some parts of "Blinded Devil" have been released as a miniseries on the Internet site www.blindedevil.tv (now extinguished) and can be watched on YouTube.
 31. Sophie Samyn, "Nollywood in the Diaspora," 47.
 32. Besides the production companies that I have listed, there are few more ventures that should be mentioned here, even if I do not have the data needed to analyze their work in depth. These production companies are Andy Amadi Okoroafor's Clam Films based in France, Andy Omoregbe's Zenith Entertainment based in Spain, and Kennedy Uyi

- Oviahon's Komic Relief Pictures based in Italy (which recently ceased activity because of Oviahon's death).
33. Mariagiulia Grassilli, "Migrant Cinema."
 34. Personal communication, Lagos, December 16, 2010.
 35. Haynes, *Nigerian Video Films*.
 36. Izoya was able to achieve this for a number of reasons. Imasuen, for instance, was particularly keen to take part in diasporic productions, because, thanks to Izoya's invitation, he could obtain a Schengen visa and thus spend some additional time in Europe and shoot footage for other film projects produced by his own production company (*Sinners in the House* and *Ebuwa*, for example). Furthermore, as I better discuss below, Izoya produced his videos at the margins of larger entrepreneurial projects involving a number of shows with well-known Nigerian stars. In most cases, these events generated remarkable box-office results and became the main source of capital that was later invested in film production.
 37. The tours included shows in Germany, Holland, Greece, Spain, Italy, and Belgium. Something similar had already been done in the UK since the mid-1990s with the organization of the "Afro-Hollywood" award ceremony, in which Nollywood stars were invited to meet their diasporic fans and receive special audience awards. However, these kinds of events were not related to the activity of diasporic production companies. See F. Odjegba, "Nigerian Film Stars Storm London," *Thisday*, October 11, 1996.
 38. Personal communication, London, December 9, 2009.
 39. I am referring to Nigerian diasporic directors and producers such as Tony Abulu (United States) and Lonzo Nzekwe and Onyekachi (Lucky) Ejim (Canada). The work of these filmmakers is paralleled, in Nigeria, by a similar movement toward high-value productions and international cinema distribution. Within this new wave, the names of Tunde Kelani, Kunle Afolayan, Jeta Amata, Mahmood Ali-Balogun, and Chineze Anyaene are probably the best known. See Jedlowski, "From Nollywood to Nollywood."
 40. Ganti, *Producing Bollywood*.
 41. At the time of my ethnographic research, Omoigui had a number of issues with his Italian visa and could not leave Italy to travel to Nigeria. He thus had to rely on his sister (based in Benin City, Nigeria) to organize the distribution of the film in his home country.
 42. For a description of the relationship between corruption, politics, economics, and citizenship in Nigeria, see D. J. Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).
 43. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*.
 44. Brian Larkin, "Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities," *Africa* 67, no. 3 (1997): 406–440.
 45. I thank Ramon Lobato and Alice Burgin for highlighting the connections between Larkin's concept and the idea of "parallel" cinema practices, which were the object of the "Parallel Cinemas: Circuits of Cultural Exchange in the Global South" panel that we co-organized at the ACS Crossroads conference 2012 in Paris (July 2–6, University of Paris 3, "La Sorbonne Nouvelle").
 46. Here, I am implicitly referring to Dipesh Chakrabarty's work and to the range of processes that it has helped to identify and interpret. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).